Annex to the note verbale dated 5 February 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

The role of parliaments in supporting an immediate and robust international response to the Ebola epidemic and in enacting laws ensuring an effective response to and preparedness for Ebola and other infectious disease outbreaks

Resolution adopted unanimously by the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Geneva, 16 October 2014)

The 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Expressing concern at the unprecedented Ebola outbreak that has affected West Africa in the past months, and *alarmed* at the numerous deaths that have resulted, especially of multiple members of the same family and in the most vulnerable groups, such as health-care workers and women,

Also expressing concern at the high risk that the virus will spread around the world,

Aware that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa may, according to the United Nations, become a humanitarian disaster with immeasurable consequences,

Recalling that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has been designated a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) and declared a threat to international peace and security by the United Nations Security Council,

Also recalling that, on 19 August 2014, the African Union Peace and Security Council invoked article 6 (f), on humanitarian action and disaster management, of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, and authorized the immediate deployment of ASEOWA (African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa),

Further recalling that, on 18 September 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 69/1 approving the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to stop the outbreak, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent further outbreaks,

Aware that the non-governmental organizations at the forefront of the fight against Ebola, such as Doctors Without Borders and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, deem the international response dangerously insufficient,

Acknowledging nevertheless that many countries have already increased their funding and material support for the countries affected in West Africa and deployed personnel on the ground to help contain the outbreak,

Noting the measures taken by the States affected in response to the Ebola epidemic, but aware that the means that the governments concerned are able to

mobilize may be insufficient, and that the shortcomings brought to light by the Ebola epidemic have revealed an urgent need for support,

Concerned that many countries continue to have poorly funded and weak health systems, outdated or inadequate health laws and regulations, and insufficient capacity under the International Health Regulations, and that this hamstrings national and international efforts to respond to outbreaks of infectious disease,

Bearing in mind that the countries concerned are already suffering shortages of food and drinking water and that their economies are collapsing as a result of disruptions to trade, commercial flights and agricultural activity,

Expressing concern that, as a result of inadequate investment in research, there is as yet no vaccine or effective specific treatment against the Ebola virus,

Taking into consideration that the achievements of the worst affected countries in terms of consolidating peace and development risk being wiped out by the Ebola epidemic, and *underscoring* that the epidemic is compromising the stability of those countries,

Noting the WHO advisory opinion on the negative consequences of the Ebola response, namely the isolation and stigmatization of the countries and region affected, and on the need for all countries, especially neighbouring States, to keep their borders open to goods and people, maintain air routes, strengthen national and regional preparedness, increase the exchange of information and reinforce their health systems,

Stressing that national, regional and international action and cooperation are required to check epidemics of serious infectious diseases and that a coordinated international response to the Ebola epidemic is therefore a vital and immediate need,

1. *Deplores* all loss of life in the Ebola epidemic;

2. *Expresses support* for the governments and populations concerned in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have been severely affected by the Ebola outbreak;

3. *Demands* that all political parties in the countries concerned work together in unity and harmony to facilitate, without delay, free and safe access for humanitarian organizations and their staff to areas where the population needs them;

4. *Recognizes* that national leadership and ownership of the Ebola response in the countries concerned remains the guiding principle for international support, in keeping with their right to self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations;

5. *Applauds* the commitment and contribution of those battling the epidemic on the front lines, notably national and international humanitarian relief workers;

6. *Deeply regrets* the international community's slow and generally insufficient response and the time lost in drawing up an effective and coordinated strategy, while *acknowledging* that a number of States and international organizations have already provided critical assistance;

7. *Urges* the relevant United Nations bodies, especially WHO, which must play a lead role, to take all necessary emergency measures to reinforce their

contribution to local, national, regional and international efforts to halt the outbreak of the Ebola virus;

8. *Welcomes* the establishment of UNMEER, which must work in close coordination with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States;

9. *Calls on* the countries affected, responding countries and the international organizations active on the ground to work together closely and share information so as to enhance coordination and ensure effective control of the current outbreak;

10. *Calls on* the States that have the requisite means and on international donors to mobilize without delay essential financial resources and capacities, including medical and logistical means that can be deployed on the spot (personnel, supplies, means of transport), paying particularly close attention to the protection of women and children and of health workers entering into contact with infected persons;

11. *Vigorously condemns* the stigmatization of the countries concerned and their citizens, as this may exacerbate their humanitarian plight and have a negative impact on their economies;

12. *Appeals* to States, in particular those in the region, and all competent stakeholders providing the assistance required to deal with the Ebola epidemic to redouble their efforts to heighten public awareness, apply security and health protocols, and correct the misinformation circulating about the disease's transmission and the scope of the epidemic;

13. *Invites* parliaments to promote effective policies to combat the Ebola epidemic at national and international level;

14. *Also invites* parliaments to enact the legislation needed to improve health systems and emergency preparedness, with a view to boosting the capacity to deal with the serious public health and humanitarian crises that may result from an infectious disease outbreak;

15. *Urges* the pharmaceutical industry, the private sector, research institutions, philanthropic organizations and governments to invest in research on viable treatment options and vaccines to treat and prevent Ebola and to make them available at an affordable cost to affected populations, especially the poorest victims;

16. *Recommends* that plans be drawn up to help the countries affected recover quickly from the negative effects of the Ebola crisis based on the lessons currently being learned;

17. *Also recommends* that the international community set up a rapid health response unit to cope with health crises of this kind, and *urges* it to learn from the management of earlier epidemics/pandemics;

18. *Urges* States and the international community to conduct worldwide awareness campaigns to prevent fresh outbreaks of Ebola;

19. *Suggests*, with regard to international development cooperation, that public health — and the prevention of health crises — be added as a core priority to cooperation programmes.